



Request For USDA State & Private Forestry Grant

Applicant: Georgia Forestry Commission P.O. Box 819 Macon, GA 31202

Project Name: Minority Landowner Forestry Education & Training

Project Lead: Marc A. Thomas, 478-751-3524, mthomas@gfc.state.ga.us

Project Proposal Abstract: Several research studies have documented that minority and limited resource landowners are often not aware of opportunities to maintain and/or increase their land productivity. Research has also shown that when the underserved, minority, and limited resource farmers/landowners are provided the necessary technical support, they are able to maintain and in many instances increase their land's productivity and profitability. To ensure that the mission of the Georgia Forestry Commission (GFC) is carried out to all residents, GFC will collaborate with other agricultural and natural resources related organizations within the state to provide training and technical assistance to limited resource, minority, and underserved farmers/landowners on forest protection and management. GFC will expand its current database of minority and underserved landowners as a communication tool of increasing awareness on up-to-date forestry information.

Partnering Agencies and Groups / Individuals: Natural Resources Conservation Service, GA Department of Natural Resources, African American Family Farmer, Federation of Southern Cooperatives, Fort Valley State University, Women in Rural Development, Alabama Forestry Commission

Project Location: Throughout Georgia (see attachment) with emphasis on the black-belt counties and selected portions of Alabama

Expected Completion Quarter: Fourth Quarter 2008

Total Federal Funding Request: (Dollar amount of all federal funds requested))

**Total Proposal Budget
(Including Matching Funds):**

Cost Category	Requested Funds	Matching Funds	Total
Personnel	\$47,600.00	\$35,000.00	\$82,600.00
Materials & Supplies	\$21,000.00	\$1,500.00	\$22,500.00
Travel	\$2,500.00	\$9,820.00	\$12,320.00
Consultants	\$7,180.00	\$0.00	\$7,180.00
Overhead / Administration	\$8,328.00	\$0.00	\$8,328.00
Equipment Usage / Rental	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Printing	\$5,000.00	\$1,000.00	\$6,000.00
Other	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
TOTALS	\$91,608.00	\$47,320.00	\$138,928.00

Project Description and Benefits:

The Minority Landowner Forestry Education & Training project is designed to increase awareness and provide technical assistance to minority and underserved landowners through: Seven (7) GFC district-wide workshops/field days; conversion of a telephone burn permit system to include Spanish; expanding the data-base to include 300 additional minority landowners; and one hundred (100) one-on-one landowner visits.

Enhance Working Forest Landscape – Forests are clearly the dominant feature across the entire southern landscape of the United States. Georgia's has 24.7 million acres of forestland. Non-industrial private forest (NIPF) landowners often seek technical assistance from public, consulting, and industry foresters. Of the NIPF owners seeking assistance, many seek it from state agency personnel. Southern State forestry agencies reported providing technical assistance to almost 78,000 landowners in the year 2000. Since African-Americans constitute the largest group of minority rural landowners in the South, they are probably also the largest group of NIPF owners. This project will raise awareness of minority and underserved landowners in the overall management and protection of their forestlands. There will be increases in the number of workshops and field days that target minority and underserved landowners throughout the state. Minority landowners will receive more technical assistance and information through programs such as Stewardship, Forest Health, and FLEP.

Protect Forests from Harm – Georgia's population has increased to the point that wildfire occurrence, air pollution and local smoke related nuisances caused from debris burning are of statewide concern. Georgia experiences more forest fires than any other Southern state. By working with minority and underserved audiences, GFC can continue to use and promote fire as a forest management tool and keep related problems such as wildfires and smoke nuisances to a minimum throughout the state and possibly the region. This project will keep minority and underserved audiences informed about current developments on forest health, water quality, and other conservation issues

Enhance Benefits Associated with Trees & Forests – Research has shown that when the underserved, minority, and limited resource landowners are provided the necessary technical support, they are able to maintain and in many instances increase their land's productivity and profitability, therefore enhancing the forest landscape across the state and possibly the region.

The proposed project will have a positive impact on the following regional issues:

Fractured Forests – Minority land loss continues at an alarming rate – much faster than land loss among the majority population. This land loss contributes to the fragmentation of forest throughout the South. As minority and underserved landowners receive more information and technical assistance, the likelihood of selling their land decreases because they are aware the profits generated through sustainable management as well as new markets and trends.

Wildland Fire and Forest Fuels – Debris burning is Georgia's number one cause of wildfire. A major cause of debris burn wildfires is not obtaining a permit and burning

Project Evaluation Criteria Discussion:

The Minority Landowner Forestry Education & Training project meets the established criteria in the following ways:

National and Regional Relevance – Our nation is becoming increasingly ethnically diverse and the 2007 Farm Bill must continue to break lasting patterns of past discrimination and manifest the importance of investing in minority producers and landowners. Currently, minority producers are only 5% of all U.S. producers, while minority consumers have grown beyond 30% of the total U.S. population. The nation's minority population in 2005 totaled 98 million, or 33 percent of the country's total population of 296.4 million. About one in every three U.S. residents was part of a group other than single-race non-Hispanic white, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. A special outreach program for forestry including preparation of adequate personnel to reach the growing number of minority and underserved forest landowners is critical to forestry sustainability. The vision of the US Forest Service Region 8's Outreach Plan is to ***"facilitate and foster relationships and/or partnerships with others in enhancing the traditionally underserved use of federal and state programs and services"***. The principle for outreach forces/encourages large groups of people with different perspectives and views to communicate effectively on how best to include the traditionally underserved. This project directly ties into the vision by working to increase the number of minority and underserved landowners participation in forestry programs.

Prioritization – The southern Black Belt is the largest, poorest, and most rural region of the United States. It stretches across the 623 counties that research identified from 11 Southern states that include Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia. Fifty-four (54) percent of the nation's African-Americans live in the South and most southern poverty is concentrated in the Black Belt. According to the 2000 U.S. Census, the 11 states that make up the Southern Black Belt have a combined rural poverty rate of 18.7 percent, translating into almost 1 in every 5 rural residents living in poverty. The urban poverty rate for the Southern Black Belt is 14.0 percent. This project that will provide forestry information and technical assistances as one method for solution minority landowners issues in the state and the region in hopes of improving their quality of life.

Meaningful Scale – States like Georgia, Alabama, Tennessee, North Carolina and South Carolina have seen their rural populations increase at a level beyond 300 percent in the last ten years between 1990 and 2000. This project is state-wide with regional implications. It can affect thousands of acres of unmanaged forestland as well as hundreds of NIPF minority landowners.

Collaboration – This project will collaborate with several state, federal, non-profit, non-governmental organizations such as the following: Natural Resources Conservation Service, GA Department of Natural Resources, African American Family Farmer, Federation of Southern Cooperatives, Fort Valley State University, Southeast Georgia Communities Project, Women in Rural Development, Alabama Forestry Commission

Outcomes – This program will increase awareness to minority and underserved audiences of the importance of sustainable forest management and protection strategies. As awareness increases, minority and underserved audience will become more knowledgeable of wildfire danger, forest insect & disease, forest marketing, water quality, and forest stewardship, therefore making better decision in their overall management plan. This will cause a reduction in the risk of wildfire danger from debris burning, increase forest health, and improve water quality in areas significantly populated with minority audiences. This outreach and education project will be a powerful tool in overcoming barriers to forestry program participation among minority and underserved landowners. Even a small increase in participation can have a substantial impact.

Technology – Data on minority/underserved landowners either does not exist or is in a developmental stage. The data that does exist is usually in some form of tabular format. Being able to display this data spatially will enable the development of new outreach efforts that help minority landowners and communities interact with and/or benefit from: (a) the National Forests and other public lands; (b) production activities of private small-scale forest landowners; (c) value-added forest-related industries; and (d) forest-related educational programs at the land grant institutions.

**Project Evaluation Criteria
Discussion (Continued):**

Data captured regarding minority/underserved landowners will be inputted into a Geographic Information System (GIS) for storage, analysis, and management. As already apart of the GFC's network, the GIS will act as a conduit to identify those areas in Georgia where minority/underserved landowners exist in a geospatial framework. From this the GFC will be able to provide more efficient and effective services to those aforementioned landowners through a vast number of forestry related programs, training, and education.

Integrated Delivery – This project will be integrated within the existing GFC system of providing education and technical assistance. This project will also provide additional opportunities to coordinate with other interest groups in the state and across the region. Key findings will be analyzed and distributed throughout GFC and other state and regional organizations.

Leverage – The project will leverage in-kind resources from the GFC and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO's).

Influence Positive Change – By creating more effective outreach strategies that targets minority and underserved landowners, an opportunity will be created to exchange information and interact with other organizations to increase awareness and overall participation in forestry programs. This will create unified and diverse communities of forest stewards throughout the state and possibly the region that can have a significant positive impact on forest policy and economics.

Timelines –

First Qtr – Hire Outreach Forester; Organize meeting with collaborating agencies; Identify minority and underserved landowners. Second Qtr – Provide technical assistance to target audience; Plan first phase of workshops/field days. Third Qtr – Plan the second phase of workshops/field days; Continue technical assistance to target audience; Continue to collect location data on minority and underserved landowners throughout the state. Fourth Qtr – Complete GIS analysis of landowner data-base; Complete the remaining phase of workshops/field days; Evaluate methods and outcomes of the project.

